

**AMENDED CLAIM SET:**

1. (currently amended) A method for inhibiting [[a]] degradation of brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) in a specimen, which comprises

collecting the specimen containing brain natriuretic peptide into a container, wherein a face of the container coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics and wherein no protease inhibitor for inhibition of the degradation of natriuretic peptides is added to the specimen, and  
~~excluding an addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit the degradation of brain natriuretic peptide,~~

by which the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.

2. (cancelled).

3. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said specimen is obtained from a human, dog, pig, rat or mouse.

4. (cancelled).

5. (cancelled).

6. (currently amended) A method for measuring mammalian brain natriuretic peptides in a specimen, which comprises:

collecting the specimen containing brain natriuretic peptides into a container, wherein a face of the container coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, ~~and excluding an addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit a degradation of brain natriuretic peptide;~~ and

measuring the mammalian natriuretic peptides by standard means,

wherein the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.

7. - 11. (cancelled).

12. (currently amended) A method for inhibiting ~~[[a]]~~ degradation of brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) in whole blood or blood plasma, which comprises

collecting the whole blood or blood plasma into a container, wherein a face of the container coming into contact with the whole blood or blood plasma is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics, ~~and excluding an addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit the degradation of brain natriuretic peptide,~~

by which the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.

13. (currently amended) A method for inhibiting an activation of a substance degrading brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) in a specimen, which comprises

collecting the specimen containing brain natriuretic peptide into a container, wherein a face of the container coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics and wherein no protease inhibitor for inhibition of the degradation of natriuretic peptides is added to the specimen, ~~and excluding an addition of any inhibiting agents which inhibit a degradation of brain natriuretic peptide,~~

by which the ratio of residual BNP immunoreactivity is 50% or more after 24 hours standing at 25°C.